

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP



A magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers

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THE PUBLISHING FIRM OF STREET AND SMITH

ITS FIRST FIFTY YEARS. 1855-1905

By Lydia Cushman Schurman



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES #230

OLD SLEUTH'S SPECIAL DETECTIVE SERIES

Publisher: Parlor Car Publishing Co. 13 Astor Place, New York.
Issues: 17 (Highest Number seen advertised). Schedule: Monthly.
Dates: April 1897 to August 1898. Size: 7 x 4 3/4". Pages: 200.
Price: 25 cents. Illustrations: Designed pictorial cover as
above. Contents: Mostly reprints of Old Sleuth's Own
stories.

THE PUBLISHING FIRM OF STREET AND SMITH
ITS FIRST FIFTY YEARS, 1855-1905
By Lydia Cushman Schurman

In 1855 Francis S. Street, twenty-four, and Francis S. Smith, thiry-six--with less than \$100 between them--bought the *New York Weekly Dispatch* for \$40,000 or \$50,000 from their trusting editor, Amos Williamson. Williamson, who asked for no down payment, said they could repay him from their profits. Profits--and luck--they would certainly need as each of them planned to draw a weekly salary of only \$20.00, as well as to pay all expenses out of the paper's revenue, at a time when the paper's circulation was under 24,000, a pretty skimpy figure.¹

Two years later the Panic of 1857 struck the nation; by all logical expectations this new publishing venture² should have floundered as many other weeklies and magazines did. Instead of failing, however, the firm began to prosper. Francis S. Smith wrote stories, and with his first one, *The Vestmaker's Apprentice*, nearly doubled the paper's circulation. His next *Maggie, the Child of Charity; or, Waifs on the Sea of Humanity*, became another hit.³ The young publishers knew that the public wanted romantic tales of distressed damsels saved from lecherous pursuers. Front page illustrations featured detailed black and white sketches of such scenes as the frantic heroine leaping from the Hoboken to Manhattan ferry while the villainous male attempted to grab her.⁴

With Street's business acumen and Smith's writing flair, the paper went from strength to strength. In March 1858 the two publishers changed the family story paper's name to the *New York Weekly*. On May 21, 1859 Williamson bowed out, and Street and Smith took over full control of the paper. Since 1855 they had boosted circulation of the *New York Weekly* to nearly 80,000--an increase of over 60,000 in just four years.

The rest is history; the firm was on its way to becoming one of the biggest publishing houses in the country. For the next quarter aof a century, Street and Smith enjoyed a very successful partnership, one which ceased only with the death of Street in 1883.

The company's rapid growth was truly remarkable. On December 21, 1863, sales of the *New York Weekly* had reached 150,000, and Street and Smith paid off their final debt installment to Williamson.⁵ By 1877--a record sales year--circulation reached 350,000 an ernormous increase in twenty years.

As time passed, Smith hired many capable and creative writers; their names are legendary now: Horatio Alger, Jr., who first wrote for the weekly in 1864 then began the rags to riches tales which kept a reading public entranced from 1872 to 1899; Edward Z. C. Judson, whose famous pseudonouym, "Ned Buntline" appeared over the Buffalo Bill tales; as well as countless others, we all know and remember, who followed over the years including Charlotte M. Braeme, Bertha M. Clay, Frederick Van Rensselaer Dey, Agnes Fleming, Col. Prentiss Ingraham, William G. Patten, Ann S. Stephens and Edward Stratemeyer.⁶

After twenty-eight-years of the extraordinarily successful partnership between Street and Smith, time ran out, and the leadership of the firm changed as first Francis S. Street died in 1883 and then Francis S. Smith died in 1887. After Street's death, Ormond Gerald Smith, the youngest of Francis Smith's four children and a recent Harvard graduate entered the firm and bought out Street's interest, although he kept Street's name. Then, when his own father died four years later, in 1887, the twenty-seven year old Ormond bought out his oldest brother. Thus Ormond controlled the firm. Subsequently, he named his other brother, George Campbell, vice-president, and these two managed Street and Smith for nearly half a century until 1933 when in their seventies, they died eleven days apart.

Like their predecessors, Ormond and George divided the publishing responsibilities between them. Ormond managed the editorial department, as his father had done, and George took over the business and advertising department.

Under this partnership the firm began to reach out in new directions. In 1889 -- Street and Smith entered the Dime novel series market, then at its height--with the Log Cabin Library. In it the firm published both newly written tales and reprints from New York Weekly suitable for an adult audience. A "library" for younger readers, the Nugget Library was begun the same year.¹⁰ These weekly "libraries"--like their competitors published by Street and Smiths' biggest rivals--George and Norman Munro, Beadle and Adams, and Frank Tousey--were both lurid and sensational.¹¹

Within seven years of entering this field, however, Street and Smith scored another coup. Until this point, the public had been reading dime novel "libraries" with black and white covers. Street and Smith--in what we would call today a marketing bonanza--hit upon the idea of issuing the "libraries" in brightly colored covers.

When the first issue of Tip Top Library appeared with its colored cover in April 1896, the public was entranced with the novelty. It did not take the brothers long to perceive that they had struck a gold mine, and, in about a year, they realized their colored covers would produce more money than the New York Weekly. In an amazing burst of productivity, the firm issued approximately fifty new weekly "libraries" from 1890 through 1905. To dime novel enthusiasts, their titles are as memorable as they are legion. What heroes they produced, Nick Carter, Diamond Dick--senior and junior--Frank Merriwell, Buffalo Bill, Jess James, and Old Broadbrim, to name only a few.

With its new colored covers,¹² Street and Smith gave the dime novel market a shot in the arm. For many years following, a frenetic pace ensued among the big five dime novel publishers to put as many brightly colored covers on the market as possible.

Like their rivals, Street and Smith also published, in addition to the New York Weekly and the "dime novel" series, paper backs and magazines. The three magazines which all started

before or during the anniversary year, were Ainslee's begun in 1898, Popular Magazine, which started in 1903, and Smith's Magazine, begun in 1905. According to Street and Smith, these magazines had a combined circulation of 700,000 copies a month in 1905. What is most interesting about these magazines--or certainly one of their most intriguing features--is that they published articles and poems by aspiring writers who later became famous and well-known persons.

Ainslee's for example, printed articles and poems by the young Theodore Dreiser, during the difficult time when he was writing his first novel, Sister Carrie and the period he was so traumatized by its rejection, 1898 to 1901.¹⁴ Short stories by Bret Harte and A. Conan Doyle were published in 1898 and 1899.¹⁵ A poem by Rudyard Kipling appeared in June of 1898, and an early short story of Stephen Crane's was published in the March 1900 issue. Other writers who also became famous and published in Ainslee's included Edith Wharton and O. Henry.¹⁶ Said Street and Smith, a tad snobbishly, perhaps, "Ainslee's is a magazine that appeals to the critical and it has won their unqualified approval."

The history of Ainslee's Magazine is also intriguing, Ormond Smith as a lover of good literature barely countenanced its predecessors which were really published by Street and Smith but were attributed to Ainslee and Company--Ainslee being the Street and Smith printer. These predecessors were The Yellow Kid and The Yellow Book of 1896 and 1897, which Street and Smith's Richard Duffy edited. They are an interesting study in themselves, beginning as jokester type magazines and then allowed to bear the Street and Smith imprint.

Popular Magazine credited by Charles Agnew MacLean, featured poems by Dreiser and Paul Lawrence Dunbar, serials by H. G. Wells, and articles about the stage by such famous people as Lionel Barrymore, James O'Neil, Lillian Russell, and Otis Skinner. The firm claimed the magazine had a circulation of over 300,000 and that people wanted it "as regularly as they want their meals."

Smith's Magazine is important primarily because it was edited by Dreiser, and it gives some insights into the interests of the readers. While there are articles of general appeal, a major portion of the magazine is devoted to society doings--particularly by New York's Four Hundred and British Royalty. Upper crust matrons beam from the pages in all their finery, and the Prince of Wales or members of his family appear in almost every issue. Smith's is the only illustrated magazine issued by the firm, and it went in a lot for fashions and "women's subjects." Dreiser's monthly columns as editor were pure pap and contradicted his real values, but editing this magazine was how he made his living before his genius was recognized in America a year later.

Although Dreiser was the most famous editor Street and Smith ever had, in the literary world, at least, certainly others such as Richard Duffy, Charles Agnew MacLean, Gilman Hall, Henry

William Ralston and St. George Rathborne, were of far more importance to the firm. They were firm and disciplined craftsmen who brought limitless talent and direction to the ever-growing concern. They also had to work amicably with Ormond Smith, a man who liked to keep tight control over his empire.

In the company letters around the year 1905, for example, there is a letter from Gilman Hall which shows what a tough boss Ormond Smith really was. When he apparently wanted Hall to resign from Street and Smith, Ormond required Hall to compare a sample letter of resignation from the firm--as though it were an exercise. Poor Hall suffered agonies in this assignment, for he saw the writing on the wall, and, indeed, he was right. After Hall handed in the sample resignation, Ormond went ahead and accepted it as real.

For Ormond and George Smith, who liked to do things big, probably a final crowning achievement was the construction of and move to their magnificent new building at 79 and 80 Seventh Avenue on the occasion of the firm's fiftieth anniversary in 1905.

Their father had started out with Street in two upper floors of rented space at 22 Beekman Street. A decade later they had bought their own building at 11 Frankfort Street. As their business prospered, the need for additional space became acute and they rented more property; in 1869 two adjacent buildings at 29 and 31 Rose Street. By 1897 Ormond and Geroge rented additional space at two more facilities, some at the address of their printer at 2 Duane Street and also at 81 Fulton Street, where part of their business was conducted under the name of Howard Ainslee & Company. Still another move the following year took the firm to 238 William Street, where the entire enterprise was consolidated, and the one-hundred-eighty employees worked together under one roof.

In an ecstatic publication, modestly entitled, "The Greatest Publishing House in the World," Street and Smith described their new building and its many wonders. On the second floor the rotary presses worked day and night, a "monster" bindery was on the fourth floor, while linotype machines, which were "almost human" and an electrotyping foundry occupied the seventh floor, a location where "never a vibration is felt, nor sound is heard, except where the work is being performed." Huge freight elevators in the building were "each capable of lifting a New York Central locomotive." On the fifth floor, \$70,000 worth of paper stock lay piled roll after roll, tier after tier. If the rolls were unwound and sheets placed end to end, the paper would stretch from New York to Cleveland. At the bindery, folding machines folded thirty-two pages at the rate of 1,500 an hour. Cover machines performed at the rate of 2,500 publications an hour. Thirty presses, from small sized to six huge cylinders worked ceaselessly, and big rotary presses produced 4,500 thirty-two page signatures an hour, both sides printed and folded. The magazine presses produced 5,000 an hour. A two-color press laid on two colors at a time, and last but not least, the building was fire proof and had automatic sprinklers in case of a fire.

In conclusion certainly it can be said the firm that started out on a shoestring in 1855 had come a long way in its fifty year history.

THE END

NOTES

- 1 Ralph D. Gardner, "Street and Smith," Publishers for Mass Entertainment in Nineteenth Century America, Edited by Madeleine B. Stern (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1980), p. 279.
- 2 Quentin Reynolds, The Fiction Factory New York: Street and Smith Publications Inc., 1955), p. 20.
- 3 Reynolds, pp. 19-20
- 4 Ibid. See New York Weekly Dispatch, 10 October 1857, p.1.
- 5 Reynolds, p. 20.
- 6 Gardner, p. 281.
- 7 Ibid., p. 283
- 8 Ibid., p. 282
- 9 Reynolds, pp. 58-59; 213.
- 10 Edward T. LeBlanc, Street and Smith Dime Novel Bibliography, Part I, Black and White Era, 1889-1897. Edward T. LeBlanc, Pub. Fall River, Ma. 1987.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Conversation with Edward T. LeBlanc, 27 March 1986.
- 13 Street and Smith, The Greatest Publishing House in the World (New York: Street and Smith Publications, Inc. n.d. circa 1906), p. 1.
- 14 See for example Dreiser's articles in Ainslee's of March, August, June and November 1898; January, March, April, June, October 1899; March 1900, and February 1901.
- 15 See Harte's stories in Ainslee's of November 1898 and February 1899; A. Conan Doyle appears in Ainslee's of August and October 1898.
- 16 See Popular Magazine, November 1904, April 1905.
- 17 See The Greatest Publishing House, p. 2.
- 18 Ibid. p. 2.
- 19 Gardner, p. 277.
- 20 See The Greatest Publishing House p. 5.

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THE ELUSIVE ANNIE ASHMORE

By Straley A. Pachon

The name of "Annie Ashmore" was familiar to many readers of the weekly story papers before 1900. Although she did not gain the popularity of Mary Jane Holmes or E.D.E.N. Southworth, she had many admirers of her stories. Her true name was Mrs. Margaret B. Stuart who in part was "Annie Ashmore". Information about Mrs. Stuart is almost non-existent. A great pity that writers who gave so much pleasure to their readers have been ignored and no records of their existence have been preserved for posterity.

In a letter to a friend who inquired how Mrs. Stuart started her writing career, she appears somewhat reluctant to write about that time, but after some consideration she gave the following facts quoted verbatim from her letter of Feb. 23, 1912:

"You would like to learn something about 'Annie Ashmore's' entrance into the world of fiction. It's such an old story, so simple and unworldly that I never happened to relate it. Those who cared about it are all long gone, it is about a memory sweet and strange in my heart.

"My father was a clergyman of a country district. He had come from Scotland with his family to take charge. There were brothers in college in Halifax, and my sister and myself who were twins, absolutely alike physically and mentally, were educated at home by my father and by his large and varied library.

"The insulation in that lonely country rich in woods and wildflowers in summer and wild with the storms of the northland in winter, with the companionship of the fine old authors in our father's book shelves had the inevitable result of developing the imaginative side of our minds, and we played out story writing instead of with our dolls to the perplexity of our thoroughly sensible mother. We had to indulge on our dear parent, after all else were asleep to escape poor mother's remonstrations. One dictated while another wrote and changing about when invention faded. The fascination of those foolish days!

"One morning a sample copy of the New York Weekly reached the house. It supported the thought of ambition to try our stories on a publisher, and we each wrote a short story and sent them off to Street and Smith, anonymously. In a few weeks one appeared, then the other. How pleased we were with our success. We read them to mother; she said they were interesting but not real life, so we kept our secret and felt utterly humbled and cast down. We ceased to take the paper and tried to be interested in more prosaic activities and felt as bereft as the lost little dog. Months after a stray copy of the same paper happened along and it was discovered that an advertisement had been written running for a long while asking the writer of so and so (our stories) to communicate with Street and Smith. We sure did, and by return mail received from Mr. Street a pleasantly worded wonderful request for a serial story as quickly as we

A Request for Information by Arthur Sherman

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- (9) TOM SWIFT ON THE PHANTOM SATELLITE
- (10) TOM SWIFT AND HIS ULTRASONIC CYCLOPLANE
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could write it. So "The Bride Elect" was written sub rosa in six weeks.

"One morning a letter came to Miss Stuart from New York containing a check for \$300. So began those delightful years of pleasure and profit.

"My sister soon got married to a Halifax clergyman and wrote no more love stories. 'Annie Ashmore' was henceforth but one of the twin spirits who thought so much alike that they wrote as one. I believe 'Beautiful Margaret' was our last novel written together.

"To answer your question now about the various authors you mention. Strangely enough I never knew one of them or heard something personal about them except May Agnes Fleming whom you did not mention. She was a popular writer for the New York Weekly at the time I wrote for it. She was a very charming, outstanding lady who lived in Brooklyn. She is dead manny years. In those days writers of our status sat quietly at home and spun our wonder tales with occasional trips abroad, in the rest of the time, hiding our identity behind the pen names from all save our publisher."

Miss Stuart indicates their first serial for the New York Weekly was "The Bride Elect; or, The Doom of the Double Roses" (Vol. 23 No. 47 to Vol. 24 No. 6, Oct. 8 to Dec. 24, 1868.) and the last collaboration was on a serial called "Beautiful Margaret". A long search failed to locate this title. I assume that after 40 years her memory may have been at fault. The closest to it was The Faithful Margaret; or, The Sleuth-Hound of Castle Brand. A Fateful Love Story" (Vol. 25 Nos. 11 to 27, Jan. 27 to May 19, 1870). "Faithful Margaret," by Annie Ashmore was published in book form in 1877. Their first story, "The Bride Elect" was published anonymously. It was not until their second serial, "The Beautiful Reinze" that the pseudonym Annie Ashmore was attached. It is not known if the choice was by the sisters or the editor.

Miss Stuart after going solo began to contribute to other publications. In 1885 she tried her hand in the juvenile field with the Golden Argosy. Her first contribution there was a short sketch, "How Jodie Saved the Camp" appeared in the June 27, 1885 issue. Her next was a serial, a more ambitious undertaking and most widely reprinted story in book form titled "Who Shall Be the Heir? or, Frank Somerset in the Smugglers Cave" Vol. 4 No. 37 to Vol. 5 No. 2, Aug. 14 to Dec. 11, 1886). It was reprinted in book form as "The Smugglers Cave". In all Miss Stuart contributed seven serials to the Golden Argosy-Argosy. One curious fact about the story was that when it was submitted for renewal of copyright, her sister's name was given as author. In a sense it was true she had been "Annie Ashmore" but did not write that story. Miss Stuart had turned over the copyright to her sister. It had been erroneously assumed that Miss Margaret Stuart had married and that was her married name. As far as it is known she never married.

Some time around 1910 she moved in with her sister and clergyman husband.

Miss Stuart continues her letter: "Last April (1911) my brother-in-law's parsonage caught fire from rubbish burning on the adjoining church property. Too zealous church officials were cleaning up for the reception of the new young minister, my brother-in-law having resigned from failing health. Most of my stories which were stored up the attic were burned before the fire was brought under control."

She was still living in 1915. She also wrote as "Grace Mortimer.

The End

ADDITIONS TO STANLEY A. PACHON'S LIST OF ALGER SHORT STORIES
By Victor Berch

1. AUNT MEGHITABLE'S FIRST OFFER, by Caroline F. Preston (new)
Gleason's Monthly Companion Feb. 1875
2. CHARITY NOBLE'S OFFER, By Caroline F. Preston (new)
Gleason's Monthly Companion Aug. 1880
3. MRS. BENTLEY'S VISITORS AND HOW SHE GOT RID OF THEM, By
Caroline F. Preston (new)
Gleason's Monthly Companion May 1875
4. PISTOLS FOR TWO; OR, THE MOCK DUEL, By Carl Cantab
Gleason's Monthly Companion July 1876
5. THE ROYAL GAME, By Horatio Alger, Jr.
Gleason's Monthly Companion Dec. 1880

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REPORT ON RESEARCH

By Lydia Cushman Schurman

This month we have researchers with two specialized topics and two conferences to report.

Before beginning, however, a note from Stanley A. Pachon brings the news that his days as a DNR contributor may be coming to an end. He is eighty now, and his eyesight is no longer as good as it once was. As any DNR reader knows, Pachon's carefully researched articles over many years have brought us valuable information and interesting reading. It seems appropriate in this column to express our appreciation for all his hard work from which so many of us have benefited and been enriched. From us all, then, thank you Stanley Pachon; good luck and good health to you.

The two researchers reporting this month with special topics are Dr. Jean Carwile Masteller, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of English at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington and Julius R. (Bob) Chenu, who needs no introduction to DNR members.

Masteller has a book in progress on "Rising Expectations: Fiction for Working Girls in the Late Nineteenth-Century." She is studying working girl stories serialized in family story papers, "libraries," cheap paperback novels and melodramatic plays related to the stories. She is analysing both the production and consumption of popular culture for working girls in the last half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth-centuries. In a related project, she is also working on *My Queen*, a short-lived weekly for working girls.

Masteller has four questions she would like help with from DNR readers. First, does anyone have clues that would help her confirm who actually read these popular materials? Second, does anyone have evidence of actual readers' responses DNR readers will send her. Third, does anyone know how the story papers advertised? Lastly, does anyone have copies of the materials she is studying? Although Masteller says she has some answers to these questions, she would welcome more evidence. She would also like to hear from people interested in this project. Kindly write to her at Department of English, Whitman College, Walla Walla, Washington, 99362.

Bob Chenu is working on the books of Byron A. Dunn, especially their format changes. He would like anyone who has any of Dunn's *Young Kentuckians*, *Young Missourians*, and *Young Virginians* series books to advise him of three descriptive characteristics: the date shown on the title page, the color cloth binding, and the color of the lettering on the spine of each title. Chenu says these are difficult books to get, and he would like to widen his sample. information in this manner. Please write him at 16 Farragut Road, Merrick, New York 11566.

The results of more research in the fields of dime novels and children's literature have been and will be presented at two

conferences: the American Culture Association at New Orleans in March and the University of South Florida at Tampa in May. (Sorry to say this last conference has been cancelled)

Under the Chairmanship of J. Randolph Cox, the Dime Novel Section of the American Culture Association, presented four panels this year, representing the highest number of speakers as we have ever had. Speakers and their research topics were: "Up in the Air with Andy Lane: The Eustace Adams Books," David K. Vaughan, Air Force Institute of Technology; "Down with the Kaiser and Up with the Flag," M. Paul Holsinger, Illinois State University; "The Boy Scouts versus the Series Books; or, Who's the Guy in the White Hat?" John T. Dizer, Utica, New York; "Heroines in Dime Novels," J. B. Dobkin, University of South Florida; "Keep the Home Fires Burning: National Stability and Popular Fiction from Sumter to the Centennial," Kathleen Diffley, University of Iowa; "Gender, Romance and the Work Place: The Discovery of the Working Girl in 19th Century Popular Fiction," Jean Masteller, Whitman College; "Jack Harkaway, British and American Folk Hero," Edward T. LeBlanc; "Robert Merry's Museum and the Lure of the Sensational," Pat Pflieger, Illinois State University; "Anthony Comstock and His Crusade Against 'Immoral' 19th-Century Dime Novels and Story Papers," Lydia Schurman, Northern Virginia Community College; "The Use of Mexican Characters in Dime Novels of the Southwest," James L. Evans, Pan American University; "Internal Publishing Practices of 19th-Century Story Newspapers," Arlene Moore, Wichita State University; and "The Dime Novel Companion----a Research Tool in the Making," J. Randolph Cox, Saint Olaf College.

Hopefully, some of the papers presented at these conferences will find their way into the Roundup so many more of use can enjoy them. (Ed. note: many will be featured in the coming issues of the Roundup.)

Please keep your reports on research and questions DNR readers can help you with coming in. The next deadline for this column is two weeks after you receive this issue. My address again is 3215 North 22nd Street, Arlington, Va. 22201-4203.

EDITORIAL NOTE

This issue is two months late due to the debilitating illness of Harlan Miller who has been printing the Roundup for the last FIFTY years. I hope all subscribers will bear with me. I have invested in a word processor and hopefully I will get more proficient in its use as I get better acquainted with it. The next issue should be in the mails by the second week in June. Thereafter I hope to have it ready the first of each month due.

It has been suggested that Harlan Miller be presented an award of some kind for his devoted service over such an extended period of time. Donations for such an award can be made to your editor and a suitable plaque will be acquired in accordance with the amount received and presented to Mr. Miller.

READY APRIL 1 = ORDERS NOW TAKEN

THE WILLIAM T. ADAMS ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY
Part 1: "The Star Spangled Banner"
by Peter C. Walther

This first part, in a projected series of the author's complete published works, identifies and catalogues 192 known items (editorials, articles, serials, poems, stories etc.) which Adams contributed to this rare Boston literary weekly. The research is largely based on primary source material only recently discovered. Included is a listing of heretofore unknown pseudonyms ("Oliver Optic" was just one of many) and a general publishing history of the periodical as well as specific geographical citations (library/city) for each surviving issue and explanations for all entries and sources.

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Beadle's Pocket Library #321 BILLY THE KID FROM
FRISCO 1896.

Tousey's New York Detective Library #411 OLD KING
BRADY AND BILLY THE KID by Francis W. Doughty
Oct. 11, 1890.

BILLY THE KID, THE NEW MEXICO OUTLAW; OR, THE BOLD
BANDIT OF THE WEST. Edmund Fable Jr., Denver:
The Denver Publishing Co. 1881.

And, any and all of:

Tousey's James Boys Weekly

Street and Smith's Jesse James Stories

Also seeking: Garrett, Pat, and Upson, Marshall. THE AUTHENTIC
LIFE OF BILLY THE KID, NOTED DESPERADO OF THE
SOUTHWEST. 1882 ed.

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